

Every coach and athletic director that I know says this is a huge problem and that we need some type of uniform standards and regulations to govern sports agents. One of the biggest problems that we have is these people come on the campus and nobody knows they are there. They see the players in the dorms; they harass them and call them on the phone. Some of the better players end up having to get unlisted phone numbers because of all the harassment.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, there are only 15 States that have tough laws regulating actions by sports agents. There are 17 States, including my home State of Nebraska, that have no laws at all regulating sports agents, and then there are 18 States remaining that have some laws. It is kind of a hodgepodge, a patchwork; and there is no consistency and no teeth in the regulations. So the majority of young people coming out of college really are not protected by any laws that would govern sports agents.

With this problem in mind, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. GORDON) and I have introduced H.R. 361, the Sports Agent Responsibility and Trust Act, which is also known as SPARTA. SPARTA protects student athletes by making it illegal for sports agents to entice student athletes with false or misleading information, promises, or representations in order to lure them into a contract. SPARTA would protect student athletes when they travel to other States.

Some student athletes are in States with some laws, but once they go home for the summer in another State or go to a bowl game, sometimes they are preyed upon by sports agents in those areas. So this provides a uniform Federal backstop. It does not supplant State laws, and we feel it is a very sound piece of legislation.

As of April 2002, the National Football League Players Association reported 1,200 certified football agents. Eight hundred of those represent no clients. Now, those are the guys that are really not very well qualified, and they are particularly dangerous because they are desperate to represent somebody. So they will make almost any kind of a deal, any kind of a promise to get someone committed.

We think, of course, that this is obviously a huge problem. But let me just cite two cases from my own experience. One: we were getting on the bus to go to the Orange Bowl, and I could not find my quarterback two hours before kickoff. I finally located him in one corner of the lobby cornered by two agents that he had never seen before, I had never heard of before, and were obviously unscrupulous; and they are hammering this guy to try to get him to sign a contract right before a kickoff. Well, of course, this did not do the quarterback any good, and it did not do me any good either.

In one other case we had a young man who was contacted at his home during the summer and he signed a

contract. He did not really understand what he signed, but buried in the fine print was a 13 percent commission for the agent. So the agent got several hundred thousand dollars from this young man. Fortunately, the agent was from a State that did have some laws governing agents, and this agent had not registered. So we were able to recover \$300,000 of this young man's money because of some sports agent legislation.

So what we are saying is we need this kind of protection for all athletes in all States. It is a Federal backstop. We think this is sound legislation, and I urge my colleagues to cosponsor H.R. 361, the Sports Agent Responsibility and Trust Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

PEACE RETURNS TO VIEQUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. ACEVEDO-VILÁ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ACEVEDO-VILÁ. Mr. Speaker, a couple of years ago, I met a young girl from Vieques by the name of Marakiani Olivencia. She came up to me with a small container of sand in her hand and shared with me her desire to return that sand to Vieques with me after the Navy bombing practices ended.

With passion and sincerity this girl represented what so many had felt for so long. I told her that sooner or later such a day would come, and we would return that sand to Vieques together.

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Indeed, such a day is upon us. As of today, Vieques is no longer a Navy bombing range, and has become the newest addition to the National Wildlife Refuge System. I have with me a copy of the letter and memorandum of agreement signed between the Navy and the Fish and Wildlife Service making official that land transfer and ask that it be made part of the RECORD.

For the first time in over 60 years, Vieques awoke this morning, their island not having been bombed last night, the island not to be bombed today, and knowing for certain that the island shall never be bombed again. Now the shore of Vieques will be dominated only by the sound of the surf, the birds, and the wind. The thousands of Puerto Ricans living in Vieques achieved their long-sought peace. Today "Pas para Vieques" is a reality.

For generations, the Viequeses have not known life without bombing. Thousands of families have lived their whole

life with the concussion of bombs and shells upon their island at night, during the day, in the coastal waters.

Vieques became a bombing and training range for the Navy in the 1940s during World War II. Without a doubt, much has been changed since then. While the bombing has continued, awareness about the island of Vieques has grown. Viequeses and Puerto Ricans reached out, and shared with people what was happening to their island. Well, over a hundred Members of Congress actively supported bringing an end to the bombing. I must note a few of them, particularly the members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and my colleagues, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GUTIERREZ), the gentleman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. SERRANO). I must also thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON), ranking member of the Committee on Armed Services, the Congressional Black Caucus, activists, and many common citizens of the United States and elsewhere who became involved in the effort to return peace and to end bombing of the island of Vieques.

Puerto Ricans also enjoyed strong leadership on this issue by President Bill Clinton and President Bush, who both realized that this was an issue of human rights and the citizens of Puerto Rico have suffered for too long. Having worked with the White House and both Commanders-in-Chief on this issue, I know that our national security and the well-being of thousands of citizens in Vieques were taken into consideration when making this determination.

On behalf of Puerto Rico, I thank President Clinton and President Bush for ending the bombing of Vieques. Puerto Rico will never forget your resolute commitment. Today is a day of discovery, wonderment and joy.

Unfortunately, last night a small group of people rushed the fence of the range and recklessly overturned vehicles, set fires and destroyed government property. It is unfortunate that some have undermined the peaceful protest of the past. Prayers of thanks, fireworks, parades and excitement will accompany the joy of today. I strongly condemn those few who have shown disrespect to the United States, Puerto Rico and Vieques. All must know that the overwhelming majority of Puerto Ricans are proud of their bond with the United States, and our support for the common defense is resolute.

While we celebrate the end of the bombing, much work remains. Over 60 years of explosions, bombings, waste disposal and burning have left much of the Vieques range littered with a deadly combination of unexploded ordnance and toxic chemicals. I am confident that in cooperation with EPA, Fish and Wildlife, the Pentagon, the Puerto Rican government and Vieques, we will be able to reclaim this land.

So to Markiani, the young girl who brought me the sand from Vieques, I